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ABSTRACT

This document examines key leadership issues related to effective special education and reviews emerging standards in knowledge and skills for effective principal performance. An introduction notes school responsibility to provide students with disabilities with access to the general curriculum and ongoing monitoring of progress. The paper then examines the evolution of the principal's role and his/her influence on building-level special education services. Discussion of the principal's professional development needs is followed by a section identifying leadership challenges including growing principal shortages and its impact on special education. Next, using the Standards for School Leaders framework developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers, it examines current recommendations for development of principals and possible implications for effective special education administration. These standards address a shared vision of learning, school culture and instruction, organizational management, collaboration with families and community, and ethics. The paper notes an unintended outcome of these standards has been longer personnel preparation programs, as few states have reduced existing licensure requirements. It urges research into alternative school leadership models. (Contains approximately 120 references.) (DB)

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Principals and Special Education: The Critical Role of School Leaders

Prepared for the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education
and the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education

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In addition to our authors and reviewers, many individuals and organizations have contributed substantially to our efforts, including Drs. Erling Boe of the University of Pennsylvania and Elaine Carlson of WESTAT. We also have benefited greatly from collaboration with the National Clearinghouse for the Professions in Special Education, the Policymakers Partnership, and their parent organizations, the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

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ABSTRACT

Special education presents one of the major challenges facing school leaders in this era of comprehensive school reform. Today, schools must provide students with disabilities appropriate access to the general curriculum and effective instructional support. Student progress must be monitored closely and demonstrated through participation in assessment efforts. Research suggests that the principal's role is pivotal in the special education process; however, few school leaders are well prepared for this responsibility. This paper examines key leadership issues related to effective special education and reviews emerging standards for principal performance to determine the knowledge and skills that effective school leaders need. Recommendations for future research and leadership preparation are offered.

INTRODUCTION

For more than a quarter of a century, schools have been challenged to meet both the intent and the spirit of federal laws regarding the education of students with disabilities (Turnbull & Cilley, 1999). Special education has evolved from primarily segregated learning environments--often characterized by low academic expectations, social isolation for students and their teachers, and a curriculum poorly aligned with general education. Today, special education is viewed less as a place and more as an integrated system of academic and social supports designed to help students with disabilities succeed within least restrictive environments (LRE) (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2001; Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). For most children and youth with disabilities, this means that the vast majority of their learning takes place in general education classrooms (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001).

At the same time, our nation has also embraced a far-reaching set of academic school reforms designed to make schools more rigorous learning environments (Thurlow, 2000). Virtually all states have adopted comprehensive academic standards. Most are implementing corresponding measures that hold students and professionals accountable for higher performance (Giacobbe, Livers, Thayer-Smith, & Walther-Thomas, 2001). These high-stakes measures are affecting critical dimensions of school life, such as grade promotion, graduation, professional tenure, and school and district accreditation (Thurlow, 2000; Vernon, Baytops, McMahon, Holland, & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

As the pressures in schools mount, many have questioned the impact these efforts are having on students with disabilities and others at risk for academic failure (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1993, 1995). Specifically, are low-achieving students benefiting from academic reform efforts, or are many left behind as teachers and administrators feel pressured to concentrate on those who have a greater likelihood of passing high-stakes assessments (Thurlow, 2000)? That is, given limited time, few support resources, and growing public scrutiny, professionals feel compelled to perform academic triage—abandoning students with the most significant learning needs in favor of students who have a greater chance of academic survival in rigorous learning environments (Giacobbe et al., 2001; Vernon et al., 2002).

Recognizing the need to safeguard the educational rights of all students, recent federal legislation has addressed these concerns. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (USDOE, 1997) specified that students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum and participate in assessments. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (USDOE, 2002), a sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) creates additional provisions to ensure that no children—especially those with the greatest learning needs—are neglected in standards-driven learning environments. NCLB redefines the federal role in K-12 education with the goal of closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. States must establish standards and test every student's progress using tests designed for the standards. Progress must be measured for all. State and local assessment scores must be disaggregated to show how well students who are economically disadvantaged,

come from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency perform (USDOE, 2002).

As expectations and pressures have continued to rise, principal leadership in school reform has become increasingly more important (National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP], 2001a, 200lb; National Staff Development Council [NSDC], 2001). It has long been recognized that effective principals are capable instructional leaders and skilled site-based managers (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Their leadership is pivotal for the improvement of educational opportunities for all students, especially those with unique learning needs. As noted in *Implementing IDEA: A Guide for Principals* (CEC & ILIAD, 2001), "The principal's values, beliefs, and personal characteristics inspire people to accomplish the school's mission" (p. 19). Principals who genuinely believe that the school's mission is achieving academic success for all communicate this value to their internal and external audiences. They collaborate with others to develop effective learning communities. They ensure that staff members have the support and resources needed—e.g., common planning time, manageable teaching schedules, heterogeneous classroom rosters, professional development opportunities, skilled paraprofessionals—to perform their jobs well (Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

The relationship between principal leadership and special education has not received much attention until recently. Papers and reports related to the roles and responsibilities of principals in effective schools generally do not make specific references to the needs of students with disabilities and special education teachers (e.g., Educational Research Service [ERS], 1998, 2000; NAESP, 2001b; Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2000; National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983). During the past decade, however, emerging research has demonstrated a significant relationship between special education teacher attrition and school leadership.

In this paper, we first examine principals' roles and their influence on building-level special education services. Next, using the Standards for School Leaders framework (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1996), we examine current recommendations for principal development and possible implications for effective special education administration. Finally, we offer recommendations for future research and principal preparation.

EVOLUTION OF THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

Until the 1970s, the principal's job was quite clearly, although narrowly, defined: principals served as building managers and student disciplinarians. During the 1970s, their roles began evolving, in large measure, because of emerging research on effective schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998). This work showed that principal functions were linked directly to student achievement, even in high-poverty schools that faced complex challenges (Brookover, Beamer, Efthim, et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979a; Weber, 1971). Specifically, effective principals developed learning communities that emphasized high academic standards and expectations (Brookover et al., 1982; Weber, 1971); shared leadership and collaboration; continuity of high-quality instructional programs; and effective communication (Marcus, 1976; Wellisch, MacQueen, Carriere, & Duck, 1978). As the principal's role changed, the term *instructional leadership* emerged to describe a broad set of principal roles and responsibilities that addressed many of the workplace needs of successful teachers (Brieve, 1972; Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Over the past 30 years, the importance of effective instructional leadership has continued to be well documented in the literature (CCSSO, 1996; Edmonds, 1979b, 1982; Gates, Ross, & Brewer, 2001; IEL, 2000; Leithwood, 1990; NAESP, 2001b; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Senge, 1990). Indeed, Peterson and Deal (1998) contend that principals are the key to shaping a positive school culture. Effective principals skillfully engage stakeholders, e.g., students, teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, other support personnel, families, business partners. Together they develop child-centered communities that are based on shared values and beliefs, a coherent vision of the future, and a mission to educate all students well (Lipp, 1992).

These leaders see themselves as stewards and coaches in the development of a school culture of inclusiveness (Burrello & Lashley, 1992; National Association of State Boards of Education [NASBE], 1992; National Council on Disability [NCD], 1995; National Research Council [NRC], 1997; NSDC, 2001). Effective principals encourage teacher leadership, team learning, flexibility, and collegial self-governance (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). As such, they emphasize innovation, collaboration, and professional growth. They maintain a clear focus on powerful academic outcomes for all learners (CEC, 1994; Klingner, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 1996). Of particular relevance to this discussion, in a study of 32 schools implementing inclusive education practices for students with disabilities, Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1993) found that administrative leadership was the most powerful predictor of positive teacher attitudes about this process. Similar findings have been reported in other research related to teacher attitude (e.g., Cook et al, 1999; NASBE, 1992; Rea et al., 2002; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998; Walther-Thomas, 1997) and teacher attrition (e.g., Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Boe, Barkanic, & Leow, 1999; Gonzalez, 1996; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999; Whitaker, S. D., 2000).

Schools that embrace significant and lasting changes engage in a process of reculturing in which new expectations, structures, and patterns emerge to support initiatives (Fullan, 2001, p. 44). Principals play critical roles as facilitators in reculturing efforts, which are recognized as the sine qua non of progress (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). That is, their commitment and leadership provide support and reassurance for teachers, students, specialists, and others about the value of their efforts (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hall & Hord, 1987). They reinforce their stakeholders'

efforts by addressing tough issues that arise and recognizing the efforts of others (Burrello & Lashley, 1992; NAESP, 2001a, 2001b; Thurlow, 2000).

Studies of effective schools have identified five instructional leadership priorities of effective principals: (a) defining and communicating the school's educational mission, (b) managing curriculum and instruction, (c) supporting and supervising teaching, (d) monitoring student progress, and (e) promoting a learning climate (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Blasé, J. J., 1987; Blasé, J. J., Blasé, J., Anderson, & Dungan, 1995; Blasé, J., & Kirby, 1992). These priorities keep effective administrators focused on student learning and professional development. As a result, effective leaders are familiar with current research, find necessary resources, make well-reasoned judgments regarding students' programs, mentor new teachers, provide professional opportunities for all staff members, and evaluate teacher performance (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Klingner et al., 2001; NASBE, 1992; Wald, 1998).

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Research has demonstrated that principals who focus on instructional issues, demonstrate administrative support for special education, and provide high-quality professional development for teachers produce enhanced outcomes for students with disabilities and for others at risk for school failure (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Kearns, Kleinert, & Clayton, 1998; Klingner et al., 2001). Thus the extent of administrative support affects the extent to which teachers and specialists develop and implement interventions designed to improve student performance (Embich, 2001; Noell & Witt, 1999). One of the greatest challenges in schools is the lack of qualified special education teachers (USDOE, 2001). As performance expectations for all students continue to rise, many educators are poorly prepared to provide effective academic support for those with disabilities. For example, it is estimated that as many as half of all new special educators leave the field within the first three years as a result of poor administrative support, poor preparation, complex job responsibilities, and overwhelming paperwork requirements (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Boe, Barkanic, & Leow, 1999; Embich, 2001; Miller et al., 1999). Consequently, many states and local systems must hire individuals to serve as emergency special education teachers who lack the essential knowledge and skills needed to meet the complex challenges they face. For example, there are more than 2,000 provisional special education teachers working in Virginia. Although these educators have three years to complete the necessary course work required for certification, many become quickly overwhelmed by their job responsibilities and quit before their provisional certificate time limit expires (P. Abrams, Virginia Department of Education, personal communication, 2002).

A recent study by Gersten and colleagues (2001) found that building-level support from principals and general educators had strong effects on "virtually all critical aspects of (special education) teachers' working conditions" (p. 557). The values and supportive actions of principals and general educators, as mediated by overall school culture, influence special educators' sense of collegial support (e.g., Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Embich, 2001). As a result of growing concerns about special education teacher attrition, various professional organizations now emphasize the importance of the principal's role in effective special education. For example, CEC and NAESP recently published a guide designed to help principals implement IDEA (CEC, 2001) effectively This document is based on the premise that effective principals ensure that diverse needs of students and their families are addressed through five major elements of school: organization, curriculum and instruction, professional development, climate, and student assessment. Administrators who clearly understand the needs of students with disabilities, IDEA, and the instructional challenges that educators who work with students with disabilities face are better prepared to provide appropriate support. Leaders understand the importance of well-designed learning and working environments and can facilitate the development of appropriate student placements and specialist assignments that represent student and classroom support needs accurately.

In summary, effective leaders are committed to the success of all students and collaborate with others to achieve this aim. In these schools, classroom heterogeneity is the norm; classrooms are

not structured to provide a few unofficial dumping grounds for students with challenging needs. Skillful principals invest the time necessary to devise policies and procedures that facilitate classroom support (e.g., specific human and material resources, relevant information, role flexibility, shared leadership opportunities, decision-making power) that enables teams to perform their jobs successfully (Embich, 2001; Gersten et al., 2001). For example, with limited fiscal resources, effective principals foster collaboration and classroom communication by ensuring classroom teachers and specialists have regularly scheduled common planning time to address instructional needs and classroom concerns (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

PRINCIPAL'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Although principals do not need to be disability experts, they must have fundamental knowledge and skills that will enable them to perform essential special education leadership tasks. In many schools, novice administrators are assigned special education as one of their primary responsibilities. Research suggests that most principals lack the course work and field experience needed to lead local efforts to create learning environments that emphasize academic success for students with disabilities (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996; Parker & Day, 1997). Many new building administrators find themselves "suddenly thrust into situations in which they must be the final arbiter on matters related to strange-sounding issues such as IEPs, 504 decisions, due process hearings, and IDEA compliance" (CEC, 2001, p. 1).

Consequently, effective administrators need to develop a working knowledge about disabilities and the unique learning and behavioral challenges various conditions present. They need a thorough understanding of the laws that protect the educational rights of students with disabilities. Without a solid understanding of IDEA and NCLB, principals cannot administer special education programs effectively (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; NAESP, 2001a; Valente, 1998). Although specific duties associated with the special education process vary from district to district, principals hold the key to school-level compliance (Sage & Burrello, 1994). Typically, building administrators are responsible for communicating with families and teachers about special education services, promoting disability awareness, monitoring and evaluating special education decisions and services, and ensuring legal compliance (CEC, 1997, 2001; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999).

As instructional leaders, principals must understand and facilitate the use of effective research-based practices (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; CEC, 2001; NRC, 1997; Sage & Burrello, 1994; Turnbull & Cilley, 1999). Principals who understand effective practices and recognize the instructional demands that classroom teachers and building specialists face can provide more appropriate support to these professionals (Gersten et al., 2001; Gonzalez, 1996; Wald, 1998). Without a clear understanding of professional support needs (e.g., manageable case load responsibilities; professional development opportunities to hone teaming, instructional, and progress monitoring skills), principals may unintentionally thwart teacher efforts to provide quality support services for students with disabilities (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; CEC, 2001; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999; Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

Effective principals know their own professional strengths and interests; understand the time constraints they face; recognize staff members' talents, skills, and professional growth interests and needs; and know how to foster shared leadership to support new instructional initiatives. Skillful principals nurture the professional development of local facilitators who understand effective instructional models, have effective teaching and management skills, and are committed to sustained implementation of various innovations. By fostering the development of others, effective principals can build support networks that facilitate lasting implementation (Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Loucks-Horsley & Roody, 1990).

Walther-Thomas and colleagues (2000) noted that schools become more inclusive as they become more collaborative. Effective leaders know how to build positive relationships that increase the social capital of their schools (Coleman, 1990). By creating and supporting relational networks that facilitate dialogue, support, and sharing between teachers, administrators, students, and families, the social capital grows as stakeholders work together for the benefit of all learners, including those with disabilities and others at risk. These relational networks are particularly critical to the lasting success of special education efforts (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1999). By building trust, improving and increasing communication, and sharing knowledge and skills about effective ways to serve all students, the synergy of teamwork takes hold and all participants benefit (Wasley, Hampel, & Clark, 1997).

Given the complexity of federal and state rules and regulations and limited special education experience, it is not surprising that many principals feel poorly prepared for these responsibilities. They report the need for additional knowledge and skills to help them develop and implement appropriate programs and support systems for these students. In a recent study, principals identified help and information about implementing successful special education programs as their greatest need (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES, GROWING PRINCIPAL SHORTAGES, AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

Leadership Challenges

In addition to expectations for effective instructional leadership, many other non-instructional responsibilities have been added to the principal's job over the past 30 years (e.g., greater professional accountability, increased expectations regarding home-school communication) (Drake & Roe, 1999). Many traditional responsibilities—such as ensuring a safe environment, managing the budget, and maintaining discipline—have become increasingly complex and time-consuming (Murphy, 1994; Whitaker, 1998). At the same time, considerable decision making has been decentralized to local schools, but there are few clear guidelines for delineating which responsibilities are the principal's and which remain at the district level (Drake & Roe, 1999; Williams & Portin, 1997).

As principals attempt to handle the diverse responsibilities they face within the context of increasingly critical constituencies— e.g., state and federal policymakers, families, community members, school boards, and professional associations—complexities arise (Hughes, 1999). The balance between instructional leadership and management responsibilities presents challenges for school administrators (IEL, 2000). For example, because management tasks are more explicit and procedural compliance is typically a higher priority for district-level administrators, instructional leadership may be neglected (Hughes, 1999; Valente, 1998; Williams & Portin, 1997). Principals report that they lack time to be effective instructional leaders. As noted in the IEL report, "Principalship as it is currently constructed—a middle management position overloaded with responsibilities for basic building operations—fails to meet this fundamental priority...the demands placed on principals have changed, but the profession has not changed to meet those demands and tension is starting to show" (IEL, 2000, p. 3).

Principal Shortages

Given the complexity of the principal's job, rising expectations for both student and professional performance, and increased accountability and public scrutiny, it is not surprising that fewer teacher leaders are choosing career paths that result in administrative positions (Barker, 1996; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; ERS, 2000; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [USBLS], 2000-2001, 1996-1997). Although the number of individuals holding administrative licenses or endorsements exceeds the number of position vacancies each year, recruitment and retention of qualified and certified administrators are among the greatest challenges confronting school systems across the nation (Bell, 2001; Ferrandino, 2000; Gates et al., 2001; IEL, 2000).

The first regional survey on administrative shortages was conducted more than 15 years ago (New England School Development Council [NESDC], 1988). The research team found that, despite adequate numbers of residents with administrative certification, many New England

school districts were experiencing a reduced pool of quality applicants for administrative positions. By comparison, a more recent national survey of school leaders—nearly half of all urban, suburban, and rural school districts—reported shortages of interested candidates for principal positions (IEL, 2000).

The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (USBLS, 1996-1997) predicts that the need for school administrators will increase by 10 to 20% through 2005. Further, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) estimates that approximately 40% of the country's 93,200 principals will retire by 2008 (Doud & Keller, 1998) . This estimate was supported by a recent Virginia survey in which 56% of principals reported plans to retire by 2010 (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). The graying of school administrators coupled with increased job complexity, rising standards, and greater demands for accountability has led to increased numbers of administrative vacancies nationwide, leading IEL (2000) to predict that "the conflict between rapidly expanding job demands and a shrinking pool of qualified candidates portends a catastrophe" (p. 3). Indeed, some observers contend that this prediction is already a reality (Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2000).

The shortage of qualified personnel interested in administrative leadership has forced many school districts to employ uncertified individuals as building principals. For example, in the fall of 2000, 165 of New York City's 1,000 principals were not certified (Bowser, 2001). In another approach to the critical shortage, professionals from outside the field of education were recruited to become school principals during the spring of 2001 in a Chicago school board experiment. A local education fund will support 10 recruits in 13 months of intensive training, including a six-week summer course by a local university and a one-year residency under the mentorship of Chicago public school principals (Konkol, 2001). Similarly, a number of states have implemented alternate principal licensure programs as a way to address the shortage of administrators.

Impact on Special Education

Obviously, the shortage of qualified principals impacts the caliber of leadership in schools. It is difficult for individuals with little or no prior experience in schools to understand and appreciate the diverse needs of learners. Even those with prior school experience who have little formal preparation for the role of principal rarely have adequate understanding of how to plan, coordinate, and deliver services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2001) argues that the principal's role is pivotal in the improvement of educational opportunities of students with disabilities and other learners at risk. If students with disabilities are to be served, principals must be stewards and coaches in the development of a school culture of inclusiveness (Burrello & Lashley, 1992; NASBE, 1992; NCD, 1995; NRC, 1997; NSDC, 2001). A lack of administrative support is frequently cited as a primary reason why special education teachers leave their jobs. Clearly, the shortage of well-prepared, competent school principals has the potential to exacerbate the current nationwide shortage of special educators. All new principals are challenged by the complexity of the role. Those inadequately prepared have little chance of doing more than "putting out fires" day to day.

PREPARING PRINCIPALS FOR THE FUTURE: CREATING UNIFORM STANDARDS FOR LEADERSHIP

Over the years, licensure requirements for school principals have varied widely between the 50 states. Because of widespread professional concerns about the preparation of principals, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) established the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to address these concerns. During the past decade, ISLLC has led a national initiative to create a common vision for effective school leadership. ISLLC developed unified standards and a professional development process. This approach ensures the use of research-based practices in preparing principals for their diverse, demanding roles.

CCSSO has published three key documents as a result of the ISLLC work. First, in 1996, CCSSO published *Standards for School Leaders* in which six standards of professional excellence were recommended to ensure quality and consistency across leadership preparation programs. Second, the *Propositions for Quality Professional Development for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1998) was designed to help stakeholders (e.g., university preparation programs, state education agencies, professional associations) provide structured learning opportunities for new and experienced administrators that will enhance their current knowledge base, dispositions, and performance related to the *Standards*. Third,, the *Collaborative Professional Development Process for School Leaders* (CCSSO, 2000) was published in partnership with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. Based on the *Standards* (CCSSO, 1996) and *Propositions* (CCSSO, 1998), this manual provides a research-based framework for guiding the development of effective administrative leadership programs through a comprehensive and coordinated approach. CCSSO asserts that this approach will produce school leaders who have the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes to guarantee academic success for all students (CCSSO, 2000).

A LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

In the next section, we review the ISLLC Standards that present the research-based knowledge and skills that administrators need to be effective school leaders. By placing effective student learning as the primary focus for all improvement efforts, the Standards emphasize a comprehensive understanding of effective teaching and learning dynamics.

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

This ISLLC standard is mirrored by a similar standard set forth in the *Standards for What Principals Should Know and Should be Able to Do* published by NAESP (2001b): "Effective principals set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults" (p. 19). Clearly, instructional programs improve in communities where stakeholders share a vision for student success that is based on common values, traditions, and beliefs (Blasé, J. J., et al., 1995; Coleman, 1985, 1988; Klingner et al., 2001). School leaders play pivotal roles in helping constituents develop a common set of instructional goals and objectives for all students (Hughes, 1999). Principals who recognize their responsibility for the education of all students and serve as the instructional leaders for all staff members improve the educational opportunities for students with disabilities and others at risk for school failure (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; NAESP, 2001b; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998; Wasley et al., 1997).

Effective school leaders know how to mobilize their communities to tackle challenging issues and confront problems that have not been addressed successfully (Heifetz, 1994; Ikeda, Tilly, Stumme, Volmer, & Allison, 1996). However, unless principals who are committed to new initiatives can win the support and commitment of their communities, their best efforts will produce few results (Fullan, 2001). Therefore, effective administrators have a deep commitment to continuous improvement that is coupled with a thorough understanding of the change process and the ability to work creatively with others to address emerging issues (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Wasley et al., 1997). In brief, they see themselves as change agents and work collaboratively with others to increase their school's capacity to involve stakeholders, envision a better future for all students, guide curriculum development, and monitor student progress (Ashby & Krug, 1998; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Senge, 1990).

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Successful principals understand the importance of school culture as a key variable in effective change (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 2001; NAESP, 2001b). School leaders, faculty, and students who share common values and beliefs work more effectively together. They share greater trust, respect one another, and are more likely to take risks (Hughes, 1999). As noted in a similar NAESP-developed standard, principals in schools that have cohesive cultures recognize the importance of focused professional development, time for learning and reflection, and shared leadership. Cohesive schools share values and beliefs, support a common mission, and facilitate both student and faculty motivation and enthusiasm.

Shared leadership in schools facilitates a process of continuous reshaping to ensure that goals are met and that emerging needs are addressed appropriately. Schools that embrace rather than fear organizational change are more successful in implementing new initiatives (Peterson & Deal, 1998; Wasley et al., 1997). Effective principals create an environment that fosters academic and social success for students with disabilities (CEC, 2001). Their behaviors convey a clear message that their schools are learning communities in which students and adults continually expand their capacity to create desired outcomes. Collaboration ensures that all students are included in academic programs and extracurricular activities (NAESP, 2001a).

For individuals who learn in context, knowledge becomes specific and usable (Fullan, 2001, p. 105). Learning in context is based on the premise that "what is gained as a group must be shared as a group" (Pasclae, Millemann, & Gioja, 2000, p. 264). Effective principals create ways for knowledge building and sharing to take place. For example, by identifying teachers who have exemplary knowledge and skills related to effective instruction and developing ways that they can share their skills in context—e.g., mentoring, coaching, workshop presentations for interested colleagues, book groups, hosting classroom observations—principals provide opportunities for shared leadership, recognition for talent and effort, and structures for collaborative and professional growth.

Principals ensure classroom implementation of academic and behavioral interventions for students with disabilities by monitoring instruction. They can use the process of annual performance evaluation to identify deficits to help teachers develop and to recognize individuals who do exemplary work daily. Effective management, supervision, and encouragement helps ensure that teachers and specialists work together to implement effective instructional programs, manage classroom behavior, and monitor student performance continuously (Peterson & Deal, 1998; Thomas, Correa, & Morsink, 2001; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

The job of an effective principal is multifaceted. However, it is primarily concerned with enhancing the skills and knowledge of individuals in the school and creating a common cluster

of expectations around implementation of those skills and knowledge. Thus, it involves holding the various components of the school together in a productive relationship with one another and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective outcomes (Elmore, 2000).

Effective instructional leaders need management and leadership skills that enable them to: (a) hire, supervise, and mentor competent individuals who are committed to academic excellence for all students (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Hughes, 1999; Heifetz, 1994); (b) establish and enforce academically focused policies and procedures (Hughes, 1999); (c) provide support for instructional efforts (Blasé, J., & Kirby, 1992; Wald, 1998); and (d) create learning communities that encourage growth, excellence, and professional risk taking (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Klingner et al., 2001). Effective principals also need to be knowledgeable about organizational structures that can support teachers and students, such as year-round schools, interactive teaming, co-teaching, and extended high school completion plans (Benz et al., 2000; Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; NASBE, 1992; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999; Rea et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2001; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

As academic standards have emerged, most states have implemented corresponding assessment systems to monitor student growth and professional accountability (Giacobbe et al., 2001; Thurlow, 2000). Consequently, skillful principals must understand performance monitoring, data collection and analysis, and effective reporting and decision-making based on assessment information. They must ensure that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and support needed to use student data effectively to make appropriate instructional modifications. In addition, effective principals recognize the need to find appropriate alternatives to retention and social promotion for students with disabilities and others at risk (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; CEC, 2001; NASBE, 1992).

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Effective collaboration is built on a foundation of excellent interpersonal communication skills. Principals must model two-way communication by seeking information from staff members, families, students, and others as well as disseminating information to these constituencies. According to Fullan (2001), relationships are essential in all successful change initiatives. "If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus school leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups" (2001, p. 5). Effective principals need well-honed skills that enable them to work collaboratively with students, families, school professionals, and community leaders to ensure that effective educational programs are provided (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Klingner et al., 2001). In particular, novice administrators need to become familiar with existing organizational expectations, procedures, and processes related to communication and collaboration, e.g., chain of command, collaborative structures, communication flowcharts. This knowledge, coupled with effective skills, will facilitate their relationship-building efforts. Emphasizing effective communication within the context of principals' accountability will ensure that administrators understand the

value placed on these skills and processes by district leadership (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; NAESP, 2001a, 2001b).

Effective principals must be familiar with available resources to support the diverse needs of students, families, and staff members. Successful leaders need to know how to access additional support as required to ensure appropriate education for all students (Hughes, 1999; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999). For example, multiple languages are spoken in most schools. Consequently, principals must ensure that their building-level English as Second Language (ESL) programs are as effective as possible. In addition, effective school principals maximize support by using other formal and informal support services. For example, effective principals are aware of the foreign language skills and cultural knowledge that staff members, students, and families have. They facilitate information and experience sharing in their building related to these topics. They are familiar with additional ESL resources: (a) at the district level, e.g., staff specialists, classroom coaches, instructional materials, site visit opportunities; (b) in community agencies, e.g., family outreach programs, weekend English classes; (c) at state and federal levels, e.g., electronic and print materials; and (d) through other sources, e.g., professional organizations, private foundations, advocacy groups, local churches.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Through their actions, effective leaders serve as powerful role models for others. Specifically, they model inclusive thinking and leadership in their support of students with disabilities, their families, and their teachers (Gates et al., 2001; Klingner et al., 2001; Sage & Burrello, 1994). They set high standards and expectations for themselves and others as student advocates. They communicate a message to the building community that all students are their shared responsibility (Kearns, Kleinert, & Clayton, 1998; National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP], 2002; Turnbull & Cilley, 1999).

Stakeholder perceptions about leaders' integrity and character are formed on the basis of their interactions with these groups and individuals. In addition, leaders' actions convey their expectations for the ethical behavior of others (NAESP, 2002). Consequently, ethical leaders must be skillful leaders who understand organizational change thoroughly and recognize the challenges that significant program improvement must address (Senge, 1990). As a result, ethical leaders must be prepared to work with others to ensure that potential obstacles are addressed effectively and that professionals and students have the support needed to be successful (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999). For example, effective leaders encourage collaboration and recognize the importance of effective and communication structures, e.g., common planning time for all teams members. They assemble the tools and resources—e.g., skill-building opportunities to develop group problem solving—needed to facilitate these processes.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

School administrators typically are responsible for communicating with teachers, families, and other members of the school community about special education programs and services (NAESP, 2002; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999; Sage & Burrello, 1994). In order to promote the success of all students, principals need a working knowledge of IDEA and NCLB so they can help educate their constituencies about the law and its day-to-day instructional implications (Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000; Rea et al., 2002). Principals must be able to garner public understanding and support for educational programs that serve the needs of all students (Monteith, 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

It is well recognized by researchers, professional organizations, and others that all school personnel—school leaders in particular—must be prepared to advocate effectively for educational rights of all students if school reform goals are to be realized. Ensuring appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities is one of the crucial challenges facing schools today. However, research suggests that few school leaders are well prepared to provide special education leadership (Monteith, 2000; Walther-Thomas, DiPaola, & Butler, 2002). University preparation programs, professional organizations, education researchers, state agencies, and local communities must work together to ensure that administrators develop the essential leadership needed to advocate effectively for the educational rights of diverse learners. State licensure requirements must include these elements.

In the interim, we must determine how to best support current building administrators as they attempt to meet the high level of expectations we hold for them. For example, how can experienced school leaders mentor new administrators and provide support through effective on-the-job coaching? To facilitate professional growth, state and local agencies must provide leaders with easy access to useful information, such as new legislative action, case law precedents, regulation changes, relevant research, online resources, and upcoming professional development opportunities (Gates et al., 2001; Strahan, 1999; Turnbull & Cilley, 1999; Valente, 1998).

Although ISLLC Standards hold great promise, one unintended outcome has been the creation of longer personnel preparation programs at a time of increasing leadership shortages (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997). As university preparation programs attempt to modify curricula to meet ISLLC competencies, few states have reduced the existing licensure requirements (Van Meter & Murphy, 1997). To make administrative leadership a viable career move for teacher leaders, state departments of education, professional organizations, and universities must find innovative ways to prepare school leaders effectively while maintaining realistic course work and on-the-job expectations (Fenwick, 2000).

More research is needed to examine the role of the principal, improve the preparation process, and explore alternative school leadership models. For example, innovative structures such as school leadership teams, co-principals, and other distributed leadership models may be more viable alternatives in today's schools. Preparation programs must emphasize the development of distributive leadership skills that enable principals to organize their schools in ways that capitalize on the collective professional skills, knowledge, and experiences of stakeholders (Hughes, 1999). By doing so, school leaders create better learning environments for all students, more productive and satisfying work environments for staff members, and more realistic jobs for themselves that focus on critical instructional issues (Fenwick, 2000; Heifetz, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

Providing appropriate educational opportunities for all students is an ambitious goal. Neither legislative mandates nor noble intentions can guarantee better educational outcomes for all students. To ensure that no child is left behind in school reform, capable and caring leaders are needed in every school in America. Given principals' roles and responsibilities, they are uniquely positioned to mobilize human and material resources that will provide supportive and

challenging learning environments for all students. Without capable instructional leaders, dedicated advocates for students and teachers, and skillful community builders, reform efforts will fail. To achieve the goals of school reform, effective leadership preparation must become a national priority.

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